

## Message Text

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ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 AID-05 USIA-06 /027 W

----- 014909

R 050440Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4180

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 4476

JAKARTA FOR REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB MY

SUBJ: LABOR LEADER EXCHANGES

REF: (A) STATE 124093, (B) STATE 188203, (C) STATE A-230 1/15/76

1. SUMMARY. MALAYSIA'S LABOR MOVEMENT IS DOMINATED BY MINORITY ETHNIC INDIANS AND SO TENDS TO BE POLITICALLY WEAK AND NOT INFLUENTIAL. IT IS THEREFORE A SECONDARY TARGET AUDIENCE IN MALAYSIA. THERE IS ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL CONTACT BETWEEN MALAYSIAN AND AMERICAN TRADE UNION OFFICIALS, INCLUDING USG SPONSORED EXCHANGES THROUGH AID/OLAB. THEREFORE, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IT JUSTIFIED AT THIS TIME TO INCLUDE LABOR LEADERS IN OUR CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM, EITHER BY SENDING MALAYSIANS TO THE UNITED STATES (REF B), OR BY BRINGING TRADE UNION AMERICAN SPECIALISTS TO MALAYSIA (REF C). END SUMMARY.

2. OF MALAYSIA'S TWELVE MILLION POPULATION, THE RULING MALAYS ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 46 PERCENT, THE CHINESE 36 PERCENT AND THE INDIANS ABOUT 10 PERCENT. ONLY ABOUT HALF A MILLION OF MALAYSIA'S THREE AND A HALF MILLION WORKERS ARE ORGANIZED AND THE LARGEST PART OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE DOMINATED BY INDIANS AND CEYLONSE TAMILS, ALTHOUGH THE ORGANIZED WORK FORCE ITSELF IS INCREASINGLY MALAY. (AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE INDIAN DOMINATION OF THE

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MOVEMENT, THE LATEST LIST OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE

MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS SHOWS 51 INDIANS, 15 MALAYS AND 13 CHINESE.) FURTHERMORE, THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS AT WORK IN PRESENT DAY MALAYSIA MITIGATE AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAY UNION LEADERSHIP AS DOES THE STRANGLEHOLD ON THE MTUC MAINTAINED BY ITS PRESIDENT, P.P. NARAYANAN, AND ITS SECRETARY GENERAL S.J.H. ZAIDI (BOTH ETHNIC INDIANS WHO SELDOM NOMINATE OTHER THAN INDIAN TRADE UNION OFFICIALS FOR EXCHANGE PROGRAMS.) THE LACK OF RACIAL BALANCE IN THE MTUC AND A LACK OF COHESION IN THE MTUC ITSELF HAVE MADE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT POLITICALLY WEAK AND NOT INFLUENTIAL.

3. THERE IS ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL CONTACT BETWEEN THE MTUC AND AMERICAN LABOR CONFEDERATIONS AND UNIONS. MTUC PRESIDENT NARAYANAN IS THIS YEAR'S ICFTU PRESIDENT AND MOST OTHER SENIOR CONGRESS OFFICIALS HAVE EXTENSIVE OVERSEAS CONTACTS WHICH RESULT IN A GREAT DEAL OF TRAVEL FOR MOST OF THEM--INCLUDING TRAVEL TO THE UN UNDER INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIAT AUSPICES. (IN FACT, THESE OFFICIALS ARE FREQUENTLY CRITICIZED BY THE RANK AND FILE FOR SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS AND TOO LITTLE ON WORKERS' PROBLEMS.) AAFLI HAS RECENTLY REOPENED ITS PROGRAMS IN MALAYSIA AND ITS REPS VISIT HERE SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR. VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN UNIONS ALSO SEND REPRESENTATIVES HERE FOR UNION-TO-UNION CONTACTS. FINALLY, WE GRATEFULLY CONTINUE TO MAKE USE OF AID/OLAB PROGRAMS TO SEND ONE TO THREE MALAYSIAN UNION OFFICIALS--IN RECENT YEARS ESPECIALLY, YOUNGER ONES--EACH YEAR. AS A RESULT OF THESE CONTACTS AND BECAUSE TURNOVER IN UNION LEADERSHIP HERE IS VERY SLOW, ALMOST EVERY KKY MTUC OFFICIAL HAS OVER THE PAST EIGHT OR SO YEARS VISITED THE U.S. UNDER A U.S.-AFFILIATED PROGRAM AT LEAST ONCE AND A NUMBER HAVE DONE SO SEVERAL TIMES.

4. CONCLUSIONS. MALAYSIA'S POPULATION IS TWELVE MILLION FOR WHICH THE EMBASSY RECEIVES EIGHT TO TEN IVP GRANTS ANNUALLY. THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT TARGET AUDIENCES IN A NUMBER OF FIELDS THE MEMBERS OF WHICH HAVE LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE U.S. OR TO HEAR A VISITING U.S. SPECIALIST. FOR THE REASONS OUTLINED ABOVE, WE DO NOT FEEL THAT LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES WOULD BE PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO OUR USIS PROGRAM. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPECIFICALLY, ALTHOUGH THE PROJECT OUTLINED IN REF B LOOKS LIKE AN EXCELLENT ONE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO DIVERT ONE OF OUR VERY FEW IVP GRANTS TO THE LABOR SECTOR AT THIS TIME. (HOWEVER, WE DO HOPE TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO SEND ONE OR TWO YOUNGER LABOR LEADERS UNDER AID/OLAB SPONSORSHIP.) LIKEWISE, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO RECOMMEND THAT A PARTICULAR KIND OF TRADE UNION AMERICAN SPECIALIST BE DESIGNATED FOR MALAYSIA,

ALTHOUGH WE WOULD CERTAINLY WELCOME A REGIONALLY FUNDED  
SPECIALIST WHO MIGHT BE IN THIS AREA BUT WHOSE PRIMARY  
DESTINATION IS SOME OTHER COUNTRY.  
UNDERHILL

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** LABOR UNIONS, CULTURAL EXCHANGES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 05 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976KUALA04476  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760301-1181  
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**Line Count:** 119  
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**Office:** ACTION CU  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 STATE 124093, 76 STATE 188203, 76 STATE A-230  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** SmithRJ  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <24 SEP 2004 by SmithRJ>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** LABOR LEADER EXCHANGES  
**TAGS:** ELAB, OEXC, MY, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006